

A THANKSGIVING MEDITATION

by Willis E. Bishop

Psalm 95:1-7: Oh come, let us sing to the Lord!
Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our
salvation.
Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving;
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.
For the Lord is the great God,
And the great king above all gods.

In His hand are the deep places of the earth;
The heights of the hills are His also.
The sea is His, for He made it;
And His hands formed the dry land.

Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For He is our God,
And we are the people of His pasture,
And the sheep of His hand.

This psalm is quoted three times in the book of Hebrews, and it is related to David, the author of many psalms. It is used in Jewish liturgy on Friday evenings in welcoming the Sabbath. It is used in some of our formal churches and called the "Invitatory" because of the invitation in verses 1, 2 and 6 to worship the Lord and give thanks.

And so we ask the question: Why did the psalmist feel this way? Why sing - and be joyful - and give thanks?

First of all, because "The LORD is the great God" (vs. 3), and He is the creator of all things. Verse 5 says, "The sea is His for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land."

In Psalm 33:6 and 9 we read, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. ... He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast."

No wonder we read in Job 38 that when the Lord spoke the stars into existence all the angels shouted for joy. What a wonderful spectacle! Who can doubt that our God is "the great God"?

Not only is He the great God, but verse 7 says "He is our God." In verse 1 He is "the Rock of our salvation." Say, is He your salva-tion? Have you acknowledged your sin before Him? Have you genuinely asked for forgiveness of all your sin? Do you know for sure that you have passed from death to life eternal?

Romans 10:13 says, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." If you have never done that trust Him NOW, and in

THANKSGIVING MEDITATION - Bishop

that moment of trust you can say, "He is my God. Yes, He is "our God and the Rock of our salvation."

Because He is the great God and our God, the psalmist continues in verse 6 with the invitation: "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

Notice the plural pronouns used: "let us worship," "let us kneel before our Maker." This is a call for public, united worship - a worship which calls for prostrating ourselves before Him - bowing down - kneeling - an acknowledgment that He and He alone is worthy. It is also a deep appreciation of the fact that "we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand" (vs. 7).

Then the psalmist in verse 2 says, "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving." Let us give thanks.

In the first chapters of Leviticus there are five great sacrifices discussed: burnt, meal, peace, sin and trespass. A part of the instructions for the peace offering include the statement, "If he [i.e., the offerer] offers it for a thanksgiving" (Lev. 7:12a). There was a way in the Old Testament sacrificial system to concretely show thanks to God.

I am of the opinion that Jonah did exactly this. During his three-day ride in the belly of the great fish he said to the Lord (Jonah 2:9), "I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving." So, after the fish deposited him on dry land he made his way to Jerusalem and there in the temple offered his peace offering of thanks for his deliverance. Then the Lord sent him again to Nineveh.

Nehemiah chose a wonderful way to express thanks. The walls of Jerusalem had been broken down by the Babylonians years before. But God had sent Nehemiah to rebuild the walls and now it was time for the dedication of those walls. Nehemiah appointed two large choirs to walk on the walls, one to the right and the other to the left, and as they met they descended to enter the house of God. Can you imagine the wonderful sound of musical thanksgiving that those two choirs raised (possibly as they stood on the fifteen steps of the inner court) and made the courts of the temple ring with thanksgiving to God? (Neh. 12:27-43)

I am reminded of another scene of thanksgiving, yet in the future. In Revelation 7 the Apostle John describes a scene in Heaven: "After these things I looked, and behold a great multitude, which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.' And all the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell

THANKSGIVING MEDITATION - Bishop

on their faces before the throne and worshiped God saying, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.'"

Dear Christian believer, the largest "choir" (if I may call it that) you and I will ever hear will present a special number of thanksgiving.

At random I looked through a part of the book of Psalms for what is recorded there:

Psalm 105:1 "Oh give thanks to the Lord."

Psalm 106:1 "Oh give thanks to the Lord for He is good;
For His mercy endures forever."

Psalm 107:1 "Oh give thanks to the Lord for He is good;
For His mercy endures forever."

Psalm 118:1 "Oh give thanks to the Lord for He is good;
For His mercy endures forever."

Psalm 136:1 "Oh give thanks to the Lord for He is good;
For His mercy endures forever."

On this Thanksgiving Day may God grant to each of us a thankful and grateful heart for His many blessings and the eternal hope we have in the Savior.

Yes - God is the great God;
He is our God.
Let us worship;
Let us give thanks.

* * * * *